As they are usually understood, the designations "nuclear wasteland" and "pure wilderness" are opposites; when they converge into nature reserves on the sites of decommissioned nuclear weapons lands we often describe this circumstance as "paradoxical" or "ironic." Taking stock of plans to manage lands (and build monuments to warn the very distant future), I argue that the categories of wastelands and wilderness are far from opposites; that their relation is more intriguing (and disturbing) than a binary of purity or corruption. Indeed, the most radioactive site in the weapons complex is also, astonishingly, one of the most bio-diverse in the United States. Removing parts of the earth in perpetuity — for reasons of sanctification or despoilment--alters a central feature of the human self, presenting us in a different relation to the physical world, and raising irreducible ethical questions about who we are when land can be classified, forever, as not for us humans.

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1, 2017**

4:15pm | Shanklin 107

**Peter Galison** is the Pellegrino University Professor of the History of Science and of Physics at Harvard University. His books include *How Experiments End* (1987), *Einstein’s Clocks, Poincaré’s Maps* (2003), and *Objectivity* (with L. Daston, 2007). His latest film, with Robb Moss, is “Containment” (2016), which will be screened at Wesleyan’s CFA after the talk at 8 pm. Both events are free and open to the public.